

CLAIMS

1. An electronic kiosk operable to provide differentiated sales-oriented interactive information services to a plurality of different classes of users, comprising:

a computing system;

a first user application and a second user application, said first and second user applications executable on said computing system and operable to provide first and second sales-oriented interactive information services to a first group of users and to a second group of users, respectively, at least some of the first and second interactive information services being different from each other,

wherein said computing system is operable to permit only a defined group of user applications including said first user application and said second user application to be executed thereon.

2. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 1 wherein said first user application is available to users of the first group and the second group without authentication and said second user application is available to the second group of users only upon authentication.

3. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 1 wherein said computing system is further operable to retrieve ones of said defined group of user applications from storage remote from said computing system for execution on said computing system.

4. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 3 wherein said computing system limits access to the remote storage to said ones of said defined group of user applications.

5. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 1 wherein said interactive information services are oriented towards sales of building materials, the first group of users including consumer customers of the building materials, and the second group of users including contractor customers of the building materials.

6. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 5 wherein said building materials consist essentially of millwork.

7. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 5 wherein said first user application includes documents containing at least some of the same information as documents of websites belonging to a plurality of respective independent suppliers of the building materials.

8. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 7 wherein said documents include at least some documents of websites of said respective independent suppliers of the building materials.

9. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 6 wherein said first and second user applications include a plurality of documents stored on server computers managed for a plurality of respective independent suppliers of the building materials.

10. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 9 wherein said documents include at least some documents of websites

of said respective independent suppliers of the building materials.

11. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 5 wherein said defined group of user applications further include a third user application operable provide third sales-oriented interactive information services to a third group of users including salespersons, at least some of the third interactive information services being different from the first and second interactive information services.

12. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 11 wherein third sales-oriented interactive information services include interactive educational modules.

13. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 12 wherein said third user application tests knowledge of the salesperson user.

14. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 13 wherein said third user application tracks attainment of educational goals by the salesperson user.

15. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 14 wherein said third user application displays status of a rewards program provided for the salesperson users.

16. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 15 wherein the rewards program rewards attainment of educational goals by the salesperson users.

17. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 5, wherein said kiosk is disposed at a store near one or more articles of building materials for sale, wherein the interactive information services provided by said first and second user applications provide information oriented to sales of the articles.

18. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 7 wherein the first and second user applications are operable to provide price information for the building materials.

19. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 18 wherein the price information is variable based on at least one factor selected from order quantity, status of the user as contractor, prior purchase by user, and amount of available inventory.

20. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 7 wherein said second user application is operable to display status of a rewards program.

21. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 7 wherein said second user application is operable to retrieve a bill of materials for one or more orders placed by the contractor customer and to permit a further order to be placed by modifying the retrieved bill of materials.

22. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 7 wherein at least one of said first, second and third user applications is operable to initiate live two-way communication between the user and a customer support representative at a location remote from said kiosk.

23. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 22 wherein the live two-way communication includes telephonic communication.

24. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 22 wherein the live two-way communication includes text messaging.

25. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 22 wherein said user application is further operable to permit the customer support representative to operate said user application and to view the same information displayed to the user by said user application.

26. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 22 wherein said user application is further operable to permit the customer support representative to mark up, from the remote location, a screen display presented to the user by said user application.

27. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 18 wherein at least one of said first and second user applications is further operable to take an order from a user.

28. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 27 wherein said user application is further operable to provide status information regarding an order placed by the user.

29. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 11 wherein at least one of said first, second and third user

applications is operable to display one or more video clips.

30. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 29 wherein the one or more video clips demonstrates an installation technique for at least some of the building materials.

31. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 29 wherein the third user application is operable to display the one or more video clips, the one or more video clips having a function of educating the salesperson user.

32. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 1 wherein the interactive information services are oriented towards sales of building materials, wherein the first group of users includes consumer customers of the building materials and the second group of users includes salespersons for the building materials.

33. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 1 wherein said user application is further operable to permit a person at a remote location to mark up a screen display presented to the user.

34. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 1 wherein the interactive information services are oriented towards sales of a category of merchandise, and said kiosk is located in proximity to articles within the category.

35. An electronic kiosk for placement at a location where building materials are offered for sale, the kiosk

being operable to provide differentiated sales-oriented interactive information services to a plurality of different classes of users, comprising:

a computing system;

a first user application executable on said computing system and operable to provide first interactive information services to a first group of users including consumers, the first interactive information services being oriented to sales of building materials, said first user application including at least portions retrieved from storage at server computers operated for a plurality of respective independent suppliers of the building materials;

a second user application executable on said computing system and operable to provide second interactive information services to a second group of users including salespersons, the second interactive information services oriented to sales of the building materials and having functions of educating the salesperson users and tracking attainment of educational goals by individual salesperson users,

wherein said computing system is operable to permit only a defined group of user applications including said first user application and said second user application to be executed thereon.

36. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 35 wherein said first group of users includes only consumer customers, said electronic kiosk further comprising a third user application executable on the computing system and operable to provide third interactive information services to a third group of users including contractor customers, the third interactive information services

being oriented to sales of building materials to the contractor customers, said third user application including at least portions retrieved from storage at server computers operated for a plurality of respective independent suppliers of the building materials, said third user application further being operable to display status of a rewards program for contractor customers.

37. A method of providing differentiated sales-oriented interactive information services through an electronic kiosk to a plurality of different classes of users, comprising:

executing a first user application on a computing system of an electronic kiosk to provide first sales-oriented interactive information services to a first group of users; and

executing a second user application on said computing system to provide second sales-oriented interactive information services to a second group of users, the first and the second user applications being operable through a common interactive user interface of the computing system, at least some of the first and second interactive information services being different from each other, and

restricting the computing system to executing only a defined group of user applications including said first user application and said second user application.

38. A method of providing interactive information services as claimed in claim 37 wherein at least one of said first and second user applications permits a person at a remote location to mark up a screen display presented to the user by said user application.

39. A method of providing interactive information services as claimed in claim 37 wherein the first and second interactive information services are oriented to sales of a category of merchandise, said method further comprising disposing said kiosk in proximity to merchandise articles within the category.

40. A method of providing interactive information services as claimed in claim 37 wherein the first group of users includes consumers and the second group of users includes salespersons.

41. A method of providing interactive information services as claimed in claim 37 wherein the first group of users includes consumers and the second group of users includes contractors.

42. A method of providing interactive information services as claimed in claim 41 further comprising executing a third user application on a computing system of the electronic kiosk to provide third sales-oriented interactive information services to a third group of users including salespersons.

43. A method of providing differentiated interactive information services oriented to sales of building materials through an electronic kiosk to a plurality of different classes of users, comprising:

executing a first user application on a computing system of an electronic kiosk to provide first sales-oriented interactive information services to a first group of users including consumers, the first interactive information services being oriented to sales of building

materials, the first user application including at least portions retrieved from storage at server computers operated for a plurality of respective independent suppliers of building materials; and

executing a second user application on said computing system to provide second sales-oriented interactive information services to a second group of users including salespersons, the second interactive information services oriented to sales of building materials and having functions of educating the salesperson users and tracking attainment of educational goals by individual salesperson users; and

restricting the computing system to executing only a defined group of user applications including said first user application and said second user application.

44. An electronic kiosk as claimed in claim 1 wherein said computing system is assigned an identifier, said computing system being further operable to display a rotating banner the content of which is determined based on said identifier.